

GAMES

FAQ

Q Marlon Brando died before *The Godfather* game come out, so how is he in the game?

A While Marlon Brando passed away before *The Godfather* game had been completed, he had already recorded some lines. These lines are incorporated into the game. However, Brando didn't record all the dialogue the developers needed, so they had to use a couple of tricks.

First, they went back to the film and used some dialogue from that to fill in the gaps. Everything else was provided by a Brando voice double. It all fits together very well, and when you're playing the game you'd be hard pushed to spot where Brando's voicover work ends and his replacement begins.

David Ludlow

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EA

Lord of the Rings: The Battle for Middle Earth II

★★★

£28 inc VAT

The first *Battle for Middle Earth* game covered everything in Peter Jackson's trilogy, so the sequel focuses on the back stories and battles. However, this creative free licence isn't used particularly well. The second Evil mission, in which you take Grey Havens, the port that the Elves and Frodo use to escape Middle Earth and travel to the West, highlights some major flaws.

First there's a dull sea battle, where three Corsair ships hold off a fleet of Elven warships while transports land troops on the coast. Once the beach defences have been overrun, you end up with a massive army, which is incredibly difficult to use as a fighting force.

The game tries to make large armies manageable by letting you set a formation. However, once you issue a move or attack command, every unit just marches straight for that point, clumping together.

Battle for Middle Earth II has the usual system and flanking bonuses, but again it's flawed. We spotted a Dwarven Phalanx spear unit on the march, for example, and charged it with some mounted Rivendell Lancers thinking we'd caught them unawares. But those spears waving five feet above the Dwarves' heads ripped our horse to shreds.

With these allusions to strategy unsuccessful, the game plays like *Command and Conquer*. You build a base, gather resources, make a big army, select it all and march into your opponent's base.

The Evil and Good campaigns are disjointed sojourns through typical RTS missions. The Evil campaign flits from taking the



▲ Getting an army to fight effectively is tricky

Elven stronghold of Grey Havens to destroying the Shire and the fearsome Hobbits therein, while a later mission requires watchtowers to be built in certain places. There's no sense of a war campaign progressing over a land or that your objectives are leading to anything in particular.

There is a War of the Ring mode, which is basically *Lord of the Rings Risk* with real-time battles instead of dice rolls. Even here, there are niggles. Armies and structures built in real-time battles don't remain once you're back on the map and the different races are similar in playing style. Each has fundamentally the same set of troops, sometimes arbitrarily. Goblins enlist Half-Trolls as pikemen, while Dwarves have axe-throwers for archers, both of which seem odd. This is a missed opportunity to make the races more distinct.

Whether you play as Morder, Men of the West, Goblins, Isengard, Dwarves or Elves, you play the same game: a mundane real-time strategy that's light on strategy. *Battle for Middle Earth II* has been put together with care, and the film-like music and cut-scenes are particular treats. Unfortunately, these are the best points.

Clive Webster

SUMMARY

- ✓ Good music and cut scenes
- ✗ Not much strategy
- ✗ Similar playing style for all races

REAL-TIME STRATEGY GAME Requires Windows XP, 1.6GHz processor, 256MB RAM, 6GB disk space
PRODUCT CODE EAE07704902IS SUPPLIER www.dabs.com DETAILS www.electronicarts.co.uk

Top 5 games

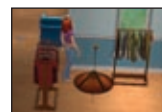
1. The Sims 2: Open for Business

£15 inc VAT ★★★★★



Put your Sims to work, as you run and manage their business lives. There are plenty of business choices and all the fun you've come to expect from *The Sims*.

SUPPLIER www.cd-wow.com DETAILS www.thesims.com FULL REVIEW May 2006



2. Civilization IV

£18 inc VAT ★★★★★



Play as God as you build a futuristic city from nothing. Plenty of warfare mixed with town planning and building means there's lots on offer for all types of game players.

SUPPLIER www.play.com DETAILS www.2kgames.com FULL REVIEW Jan 2006



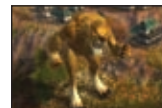
3. Black & White 2

£25 inc VAT ★★★★★



Nurture or torture your followers by playing a loving god or a feared deity. Loving visuals and paths of peace or violence make this game a sure-fire winner.

SUPPLIER www.cd-wow.com DETAILS www.eagames.com FULL REVIEW Feb 2006



4. Call of Duty 2

£18 inc VAT ★★★★★



Outstanding WWII game where you play as a British, American or Russian soldier fighting the Nazis. Excellent graphics, frenetic action and often truly frightening.

SUPPLIER www.cd-wow.com DETAILS www.callofduty.com FULL REVIEW Mar 2006



5. Gametrak: Real World Golf

£35 inc VAT ★★★★★



Strap on the gloves provided, and *Real World Golf* tracks your golf swing. It feels surprisingly realistic and sure beats playing with a joypad. This is one for all golf fans.

SUPPLIER www.amazon.co.uk DETAILS www.realworldgolf.com FULL REVIEW Apr 2006





▲ The Corleone family have always been in the business of pane

EA The Godfather

★★★★★

£30 inc VAT

From the second the iconic music starts, you get the feeling EA has handled the game of The Godfather with the respect it deserves. For starters, Marlon Brando, James Caan and Robert Duvall reprise their roles from the film.

The game stars you as a gangster of your own design, right down to hair and eye colour. Most missions take place outside the events of the film, but there's the occasional intersection. This is a good move, as it gives the developers more freedom to create the game.

For the most part, EA has done an excellent job. This game is best described as Grand Theft Auto (GTA) set in the 1940s. You have free run of the city so you can hijack cars, extort money and generally get into trouble. Like GTA, though, there are also set missions you have to complete to progress through the game, such as 'whacking' guys who have betrayed the Corleone family.

Fighting and killing are a big part of the game. The gunplay is simplistic but fun, with a range of weaponry including shotguns, pistols, Tommy guns and garrotes. Even better are the punch-ups. There's a huge number of moves you can perform using the mouse, including slamming your opponent into objects, throwing them through windows and performing a final execution move. This isn't one for kids. While it's all good fun, though, there are too many cut scenes and not enough mission. GTA struck the right balance, but The Godfather often limps along with big pauses in the action for more exposition.

Graphics are brilliant, down to the detailed reconstruction of the characters. Distance is a problem, though: while you can see miles ahead down the New York avenues, cars and people are only drawn halfway to the horizon, so they magically appear in front of you.

The Godfather might not make you an offer you can't refuse – but you'd have to think long and hard before turning it down.

David Ludlow

SUMMARY

- ✓ Ties in neatly with the film
- ✓ Looks amazing
- ✗ Too many cut scenes

ACTION GAME Requires Windows 2000/XP, 1.4GHz processor, 256MB RAM, 5GB disk space
PRODUCT CODE EAR0770478515
SUPPLIER www.game.com DETAILS www.ea.com



▲ The screenshot might look nice, but the game is frustrating to play

DEEP SILVER War on Terror

★

£35 inc VAT

War on Terror isn't a simulation of pushing biometric security or new laws through parliament, but a fictional strategy game set in the near future. So as not to cause offence, you have a choice of three factions to play: the World Force, generic terrorists and, er, China.

While we could forgive the headline-grabbing title, we can't forgive the appalling implementation, which starts with a badly compressed, low-resolution introduction video. Things appear to get better when you're dumped in for your training mission, which is a beautifully detailed replica of Alcatraz. Unfortunately, the graphics were splattered with odd patterns on our test PC until we turned on anti-aliasing and anisotropic filtering.

There was no getting around the horrible control system. The map doesn't make it clear what's going on, and the mouse is so sensitive it's difficult to get a good view of what's happening. You have a range of movement options for each type of troop, but you may as well use the assault mode and let your men run off killing everything in your way without all that pesky interaction.

The training mission is one of the most difficult we've ever played. First, we came to a point on Alcatraz where we had to blow up the terrorist's VW Camper van – the developers have obviously been taking their cues from *Back to the Future* – and plant some mines in a poorly marked area. We accidentally put them in slightly the wrong place and so couldn't complete the mission. After doing the mission again, this time correctly, we had to wander the entire island looking for every terrorist to complete the mission, which can take hours if you're unlucky. There's no skipping this section, as you have to complete the training mission before you can progress.

It didn't get better. A simulation of the parliamentary process of passing anti-terror laws suddenly doesn't sound such a bad idea.

David Ludlow

SUMMARY

- ✗ Difficult training mission
- ✗ Some missions almost impossible to complete
- ✗ Graphics glitches

REAL-TIME STRATEGY GAME Requires Windows 2000/XP, 256MB RAM, 1.5GHz processor
PRODUCT CODE KMG066.UK.RB
SUPPLIER www.game.net DETAILS www.deepsilver.com



▲ Track down strange and terrifying beasts – and then kill them

BETHESDA The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion

★★★★★

£25 inc VAT



Role-playing games (RPGs) are all about freedom of choice and playing the game the way that you want. Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion is the best yet, and there's no multiplayer option in sight.

What you get is the most detailed game world we've come across. The landscape is huge and the cities are bustling and busy. All the characters you come across are unique and have a daily schedule; watch them for a bit, and you'll be convinced they've got their own lives. While they feel as though they're real, talking to them throws up new quests that you can undertake as and when you want to gain experience and new items.

The central plot sees you searching for the Emperor's long-lost son so you can prevent an ancient evil entering the world. With so many other distractions, excellent voice acting and the immense size of the world, the slightly clichéd plot works well, while leaving you the freedom to do what you want.

Graphically, Oblivion is one of the most stunning games you're likely to see this year. The incredible level of detail is breathtaking, but anyone with a slightly older PC should think about upgrading in order to run it properly. Control is through a first-person view, which has proved problematic for other games, but Oblivion has nailed it.

Judging distance, timing, when to use a powerful strike and when to block all come into play and make for truly exciting fights. Add the huge range of spells, and these are the most inventive battle scenes we've seen in a long time. Finally, there are countless ways you can develop your character and skills.

Oblivion is the most stunning, playable and customisable RPG to hit PCs. Make sure your PC is powerful enough to get the most from it.

David Ludlow

SUMMARY

- ✓ Stunning graphics
- ✓ Brilliant gameplay
- ✗ You need a powerful PC

ROLE-PLAYING GAME Requires Windows XP, 512MB RAM, 2GHz processor, 128MB graphics card, 4.6GB disk space
PRODUCT CODE 5039437/IN
SUPPLIER www.cd-wow.com
DETAILS www.elderscrolls.com